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## The Vedic Civilization

The Aryans came to India in groups. It can not be said with certainty when the first group of Aryans entered into India and settled here. About this scholars express different opinions and their views differ not to the extent of centuries but to the extent of thousands of years. The generally accepted view, however, is that the first group have entered India about 4,000 years ago as the Aryans are found to have been occupying the whole of the present region of the Punjab from about 1500 BC.

The Kul or family was the smallest unit in the political organisation of the early Aryans. The head of a family was called "Grihapati" or "Kulapa." Several families joined together to form a Gram or village which used to be under a

"Gramini" or "headman." A group of many villages was called a 'vis' or a clan and its head was known as "vispati" many clans grouped together to form a "Jana" or a tribe and the "Rajan" or King was the head of the tribe. A "Jana" or tribe was the largest unit in the political set up the early Aryans and there were many vispatis under the Rajan.

The Vedas and other sacred books of the Aryans are our main sources of information regarding them. The Vedas are four in number, namely the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. The Brahmins, the Upanishads, the Puranas and the Epics are other religious books of the Aryans. The Vedic Aryans who spent their lives in the lap of nature worshipped various forces of nature as gods. These gods were divided into "Devas" or the benevolent forces and "Asuras" or the malevolent forces. The various benevolent forces such as the sun, the sky, rain and fire were worshipped as gods, the names of Varuna (sky-god), Indra (the god of rain and thunder), Vayu (wind-god), Surya (sun-god), Agni (fire-god)

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## Buddhism or Buddha Religion

Gautam Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. He was a Kshatriya of the Sakya class. His father was Suddhodana, the ruler of Kapilvastu, situated on the foot hills of Nepal. The date of Gautam's birth may reasonably be said to be about 567 BC. He was born at Lumbini near Kapilvastu. As he grew up to adulthood, his mind was more inclined towards spiritual aspirations and philosophical questions concerning birth, death and suffering. To divert his attention, his father married him to a beautiful princess called Yashodhara. A son was born to them whom they named Rohan which means a rope. But even the love of his wife and son could not keep Gautam from worldly life. One day he left his home, wife and child. This event is known as the great ~~Renunci~~ Renunciation.

He left home in search of Truth. For sometime he studied under renowned teachers of Rajgriha and then he went to Gaya. There in Angles he practiced severe penance and led a life of extreme austerity. He realised that penance alone could not lead him to his goal. At last he sat for six days concentrating and meditating under a banyan tree at Gaya. One night in 537 B.C. under the banyan tree, true light dawned on him and he became the Buddha or the Enlightened One. The banyan tree is known as the Mohabodhi Tree and the place where he got his enlightenment is known as Bodhi-Gaya. After attaining enlightenment, Buddha preached his first sermon at the deer park at Sarnath. This event is known as the Dharm chakra pravartan or the turning of the wheel of sacred law in Buddhism.

Five holy men became Buddha's disciples. This small beginning formed the nucleus of the great Buddhist Sangha or order. Buddha preached his religion till his death at Kushi Nagar in 487 B.C.